

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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UTAS medical students experiencing healthcare in Tasmanian rural communities

Second year Medical students at the University of Tasmania will gain first-hand experience of healthcare in rural communities across the state next week.

The one-week Rural Communities Program builds on the successful state-wide program launched last year. It will see small groups of students visiting and working in various towns from Monday 19 to Friday 23 April 2010.

The 126 students will stay at a range of communities across the state including Smithton, Penguin, Westbury, Latrobe, Port Sorell, Swansea, Ouse, Scottsdale, St Marys, Huonville, Snug/Bruny Island, New Norfolk and Kempton.

Director of the Medical Education Unit Associate Professor Craig Zimitat said the aim of the program is for students to obtain an understanding of how health care is delivered in rural communities, and the roles of the key health professionals who collaborate to provide care.

“The School of Medicine is continually refining the Medical curriculum for our Medical students, with the aim to produce junior doctors who are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge to address the healthcare needs of our communities,” Assoc Prof Zimitat said.

“Our curriculum has a strong focus on Tasmania’s rural communities; this focus facilitates an interest in our students wanting to work in rural areas upon graduation and also provides an opportunity to deliver a positive health promotion message to our rural communities and to engage members of the community to understand health issues.”

“The students will hear and discuss broad health issues relevant to the area they are placed in, by talking with local health professionals, Emergency Services personnel, patients and community members, and leaders of community organisations,” Assoc Prof Zimitat said.

Whilst in the community students may go on ward rounds (e.g. Deloraine, Scottsdale), clinical skills training (Rural Clinical School, Burnie), visit aged care facilities (e.g. Swansea, Nubeena), engage in health promotion activities (e.g. Pit-stop (Triabunna), PartySafe (Scottsdale), CORES Suicide Prevention program (Sheffield, Ulverstone, Penguin) and learn about Aboriginal health.

“We are also encouraging students to spend some time relaxing and enjoying the rural lifestyle, such as fly fishing up at Ouse, yachting on the east coast or yoga at Sheffield,” Assoc Prof Zimitat said.

“In discussions with primary and secondary school students, the medical students will also be encouraged to talk about their own study pathways, give some insight into life at university and talk about future career options.”

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